

THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

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**Abstract**

Albania and other countries 90 years overturned communist dictatorial system and established democracy. If Eastern European countries realized for a short period this transition period, in Albania this transition continues for 20 years and has not finished yet. Democracy is still unconsolidated and it was one of the main reasons why Albania did not get the candidate status for the third time, although Albania applied for European Union membership on April 2009 and SAA (Stabilization Association Agreement) was signed on June 2006. This brought that Albania did not benefit Europe's economic aid, particularly in the field of agriculture, where about 50% of the population live yet in rural areas. The study will analyze all this period, various agreements signed in the economic, political and legal fields etc. An important step was the approval of the law for the lifting of immunity. On the other hand will be analyzed economic causes, psychological, social, causes etc, that have led to the extension of the transition period. Special analysis will be done to the Albanian political class accountability and psychology of involvement in politics only for the benefits, a fact which indicates a high degree of corruption. Corruption Index 2012 by Transparency International ranked Albania in place of 113, while in 2008, has been on the 85th. Conclusions and recommendations will be given at the end of the study for the integration process in the future.

Key words: Integration, problems, challenges, analysis, democracy

**Introduction**

The overthrow of the communist regime in Albania in 90 years brought the establishment of democracy. Transition in Albania lasted more compared to other countries in Eastern Europe and Southeast. This is due to a number of factors, including economic, political, psychological, social, etc. During this 20 years period of transition, Albania tried to implement a series of reforms in the political, economic, social, fields, which were a condition for its integration into Europe.

In the framework of regional and European integration, since 1990 the following agreements have been signed by Albania with European Union.

Agreement of Trade and Corporation, signed in 1992. EU gives Albania the status of trade Partner foreseen by General System of Preferences. (Official Publishing Centre, 2000).

Regional approach, signed in 1997. The Council of Ministers of EU applied political and economical conditions for the development of bilateral relations.

In 1999 EU proposes the agreement of Association and Stability for the Western Balkan Countries, such as Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia. The study on feasibility about an Agreement of Association and Stability was completed. (Official Publishing Centre, 2000)

In 1999 Albania gets the trade regime of the autonomous measures with EU.

In September 2000, Albania becomes member of world trade Organization (WTO), In 2002-2004 Albania signed The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with all regional countries. This agreement represents trade liberalisation between Albania and other regional countries for industrial goods and agricultural products.

In June 2006 the Stability and Association Agreement was signed with EU, which came into force on December 1st, 2006.

The signing of stability and association agreement marks the beginning of a new phase of prospect in corporation with EU and certainly deepening the integration process of Albania. It became a member of NATO in 2009 and it applied for [European Union](#) membership on 28 April 2009.

**Methodology**

1. Statistical data from Oficial Publishing Centre, Transparency International
2. Surveys
3. Interview

**Results and Discussions**

Despite the signing of various agreements and results achieved, Albania lost for 3 years the chance to obtain candidate status, which means loss of European aid for the development of the country particularly in the field of agriculture, where about 50% of the population lives. To gain the status of candidate country, the European Union decided some criterias, which were not fulfilled by the Albanian government, parliament etc.

What are some of the reasons why were not met?

1. Lack of democratic culture in a part of the Albanian society.

The fact that Albanian society had not passed the stage of capitalism and for nearly 50 years were under dictatorial regime brought that democratic culture is not established, so on good part of Albanian society exists. patriarchal mentality.

1. Political class is not mature and is not acting responsibly to create conditions for the consolidation of Albanian democracy. Moreover, while in other countries of Eastern Europe, such as Czech Republic and Poland, their leaders were educated in foreign universities in United States, Great Britain, and West Germany (Campell, 2005), in Albania almost none of the members of the new political class have studied in the West.

2. Institutions are not independent in their job, especially in the field of justice. Progress report for Albania 2012 points

out that “Albania needs to further accelerate the implementation of the judicial reform strategy in order to ensure the independence, efficiency and accountability of its judicial institutions”.

3. In these 20 years created a psychology to enter in politics only for the benefits. Albania is characterized by

high levels of corruption. This phenomenon pointed out by various organizations, including Transparency International Corruption Index that published annually data based on the perceptions of the people. In the following table is presented corruption perception index for the period 2002 – 2012.

Table 1: Corruption index in years in Albania

Viti	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012
CPI	25	25	25	25	24	26	29	33	31	33
Rank	81	92	108	126	111	105	85	97	95	113

Source: Transparency International

As data shows Albania has increased the level of corruption and dropped down in the ranking. The high level of corruption perception affects direct in economic growth. Since the people have a very low level of confidence in central and local government, then they also have very low level of confidence in their decision-making.

The causes of this high level of corruption are some, but the most important is the fact that a good part of corrupted people in public administration, who have a post, have not been punishment. This fact has affected in the psychology that we mentioned above, to enter in the politics and profit from it through corruption. This is particularly obvious in the judiciary system, where various serious crimes have gone unpunished. We may mention Gërdec and 21 January events where there were victims. Particularly for the January 21 event in which the court declared innocent, the guards fired on the people, reacted harshly the European community and the U.S. Embassy in Tirana. These facts brought that people do not have confidence in the justice system. In a survey organized about 500 people, over 85% of people say they have no confidence in justice.

3. One other problem of the public administration is the criteria of employing of people, which is not based in meritocracy and professionalism but in militants’ party which bring that public administration employee, are under pressure for their job when government has changed.

4. Progress report for Albania 2012 states that “Good progress is reported in the fight against corruption in the judiciary, through the limitation of the immunity of judges”

Despite the fact that it was approved law on lifting the immunity of judges, still remain, and 3 other laws to be passed that require a qualified majority.

5. Problems exist in the levels of both central and local authorities, where disagreements between them are particularly in their financing, especially in competitive grants, which are funds for investments. From surveys and interviews resulted that the government supports more municipalities and communes in which it has won.

**Conclusions**

1. Albanian political class must be aware for the responsibility that has to integrate into the European Union, which would bring beneficial advantages for the economy.

2. Strengthening the rule of law will bring strengthening of democracy and economic development in the fight against corruption and increase the confidence of people in independent institutions especially to justice. All should be aware that restoring confidence among people through concrete examples of measures and punishments against corrupt persons would be positive prescriptions. Without such examples the fight against it would be difficult.

3. The President, the people’s assembly, the political parties including society should lead and monitor their measures and actions in the fight against corruption.

4. Although important laws were approved according to the guidelines provided by the European Union, there is much work to be done, particularly in their application.

5. Media, schools and whole society should try harder to increase democratic culture.

**Literature**

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